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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the process of collective identity, self-concept, and political development of the individual Palestinian student activist within the context of collective action in Israel. The paper addresses the complexity of the issue with the terminology for the non-Jew in Israel and the conflicting beliefs which see Israel as a Jewish-state with a Western democracy with extraordinary security concerns. Twenty percent of the citizens of Israel are not Jewish and are denied the rights of a democracy by a state imposed upon them. The most pressing dilemma for the Palestinian people has been to maintain their national and cultural identity in the new circumstances. Universities are the only educational institutions in Israel where Palestinian and Jewish students are fully integrated. The university Palestinian students are considered the educated elite with the goals and structures of the Israeli universities politically and culturally antagonist towards them as a national minority group. This pilot study of 17 Palestinian student activists using qualitative research methods was conducted during the summer of 1996 with students attending Haifa, Tel-Aviv, and Ben-Gurion universities in Israel. Participation observation, field notes, interviews, and document analysis comprised the study techniques. Initial themes and categories emerging from the study include: (1) pioneers; (2) collective identity and political awareness; (3) perception of the formal educational system; (4) group identity and group interaction; (5) gender issues; and (6) political socialization and future commitment. A formal study is scheduled for the summer and fall 1997. Contains 32 references. (EH)

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IDENTITY, MORAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG PALESTINIAN STUDENT ACTIVISTS IN THE ISRAELI UNIVERSITIES

BY

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Identity, Moral and Political Development Among Palestinian Student Activists in the Israeli Universities

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Introduction:

Particularly overlooked in the discourse about the Middle East politics in general and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular, is the situation of the Palestinian national minority living in Israel and officially carry its citizenship. Regardless of whether or not the current peace process will reach a lasting solution which will satisfy all the involved parties, there is a prevailing feeling of frustration and disappointment in the Palestinian side of the issue. The fact that the proposed solutions pertain only to the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza, leaving the dilemmas of the remainder Palestinian communities including those living in Israel unresolved, lead many to question the credibility of such a process. Within all this, the voice of almost one million Palestinians living in Israel, and comprising about 20% of its total population has deliberately been ignored. Their national identity as Palestinians and their formal Israeli citizenship uncovers yet another level of the conflict that demands more serious treatment. The most pressing dilemma for the conflicting parties is to reach an agreement that will also allow members of this community to be able claim their national identity as Palestinians and to feel that they can have a sentimental identification with the state of Israel as "their" state. Dealing with the issue along this line of logical thinking raises some challenging questions regarding the basic definition of Israel as a Jewish state in Palestine. These Palestinians exist in a politically contradictory position or political double bind: their legal status as Israeli citizens, with only limited rights, automatically

conflicts with their recognition as Palestinians--a denial of their historic and cultural heritage. It is a complex and inherently conflicted situation.

It is important to note that political action among the Palestinians in Israel has always been nonviolent and conducted within the allowed boundaries of the Israeli legal system. Through maximum utilization of the "democratic" means available to them, the Palestinians in Israel raise very challenging demands regarding the conflict between their collective identity as Palestinians and their political status as Israeli citizens. Among the principles of the recently found Palestinian political party which ran for the first time in the Israel parliament elections one can find: "... making Israel a state of all of its citizens rather than a Jewish state ... recognizing the Palestinians in Israel as a national minority ... allowing the Palestinian community a full control over its educational system" (Tajamu, 1996 p. 5). Considering the role of education in maintaining (or manipulating) the community's cultural and national identity, it is not a surprise that the Palestinian educational system in Israel has been such a sensitive political issue for both the government and the Palestinian community itself. While a political solution to the current situation is beyond the scope of this study, exploring the process of identity and political development of this community, especially its youth will prove an indispensable contribution to a better understanding of the ongoing conflict.

Problem Statement:

Palestinian students in the Israeli universities come from high schools that are systematically involved in the process of blurring their national and collective identity. While a few Palestinian students receive their national and cultural education in their families or through community organizations, for the majority the most intense process of national and political socialization takes place through student activism in the university. The activities of Palestinian student activists aim at satisfying the social, cultural and political needs of the general Palestinian student population in the Israeli universities. In other words, they perceive themselves as agents of political socialization and national

education acting among the Palestinian students community. Furthermore, they see themselves as an active segment of the Palestinian social movement as a whole and participate in activities in their home communities as well. This study views the process of student activism through the college years as a developmental and educational process for the involved student activists themselves. In addition to the contributions and services that they provide to their fellow students and community they also develop their own personal sense of collective identity as Palestinians and self concept as political activists through this experience. Braungart, indicates that youth as a bio-social age begins at the ages of 14-19 and ends approximately at 22-25, and includes three types of psychological development: "Formal, critical thinking and future orientation ... the evaluation of moral principles and values in society ... [and] the conscious search for self-identity " (1980 p. 561). These personality development processes do not take place in vacuum but evolve in a social political context. Therefore, it is conducive to explore the interpersonal and group level processes and their influence on the personality development of the student activist. What is substantial in this stage is not only the individuals' psychological and social development, but also the specific political and interpersonal context within which such development takes place.

The aim of this study is to understand the process of collective identity, self concept and political development of the individual student activist within the context of collective action. More specifically, the role of the face-to-face group of activists in terms of its political agenda, group membership and interpersonal interactions as a context within which the individual student activists develop their collective identity and belonging to the larger community will be explored. Understanding the impact of such an educational process on the development of the student activist will provide sound recommendations and feedback to those responsible for the Palestinian educational system and help them see the need for educational policy that reduces the incompatibility between the formal educational system and the experience of the college student.

Palestinians in Israel:

The dominant trend among Western commentators discussing the Israeli political system is their tendency to single it out as the exception in a region otherwise lacking in democratic and representative regimes. The prevailing argument maintains that Israel is the "only democracy in the Middle East". While this might be true in the way Israel treats its Jewish population, political philosophers and theorists remind us that the real test of democracy depends, among other variables, on the way a political system treats its minorities and guarantees them civil, political and national rights (Zureik et.al, 1993). This peculiar situation becomes puzzling when we examine the status of the Palestinian national minority living in Israel and officially carry its citizenship.

Anyone setting out to study a national minority in a conflict situation such as the Palestinians in Israel confronts a dilemma regarding the collective identity of the group under discussion. Israeli Arabs, Arabs in Israel, Israeli Palestinians, Arabs of the inside and Arabs of 1948, are labels given to the same group - Palestinian Arabs who live inside the state of Israel and officially carry its citizenship. Not all names are used by all parties to the conflict. Politicians and social scientists alike, relate to the identity of this group according to their ideological and political points of view. In the Israeli official statements the term "non-Jews" is used very often in referring to the Palestinians in Israel; as if they were culturally and nationally colorless.

The complexity of this situation leads the state of Israel to deal with three conflicting principles that determine its policy towards its Palestinian citizens. These principles are the fact that Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, that it is a Western democracy, and that it has extraordinary security concerns (Rouhana, 1989). It is an ironic contradiction for Israel to claim itself as a Jewish state and a democracy at the same time while 20% of its citizens are not Jewish. Rouhana argues that "... a state that is defined as belonging to only one people, when its population is composed of two, cannot offer equal opportunities to all its citizens" (1989 p. 40). Unlike many Third World

minorities living in Western societies, the Palestinians in Israel did not emigrate to the new system; rather, the system was imposed on them. Mari describes the situation of this Palestinian population that remained in its land and became subject to Israel's control after its establishment in 1948 as "... emotionally wounded, socially rural, politically lost, economically poverty-stricken and nationally hurt. They suddenly became a minority ruled by a powerful, sophisticated majority against whom they fought to retain their country and land" (1978 p. 18). Overnight, they were transformed from a majority in their own country to a minority who was forced to live, work and study in an alien system (Minns & Hijab, 1990). The most pressing dilemma for this segment of the Palestinian people has been to maintain their national and cultural identity in the new circumstances. In addition to their being dominated and controlled by the majority throughout the economical and political domains, education for the Palestinians in Israel especially as it relates to the development of their national identity, has been directly manipulated by the Israeli system.

Palestinian Education and Identity:

A brief review of the literature reveals two contradictory expectations from the system of education as it attends to the needs of society. The functionalist approach argues that one of the main role of education is to pass on tradition and cultural values to the younger generation (Al-Haj, 1995). Accordingly, educational systems have been viewed as involved in maintaining the existing social structures and the distribution of power and privilege which in turn preserve conservative traditions rather than promote social change (Mari, 1978). Contrary to this, there is the argument that a direct relationship exists between education and social change. According to this assumption, "... education has been considered the main channel of upward social mobility and cultural change leading to modernization" (Nakhleh, 1979 p. 7). Here, education is viewed from a conflict perspective which asserts that the dominant group relies on the formal educational system for purposes of control and domination (Al-Haj, 1995). The

conflict approach provides better insight into the situation of the Palestinians in Israel, where a discrepancy between the national goals of the majority and the minority prevails.

In the current conflict situation, Palestinian education in Israel cannot be anything but political. While the Palestinians try to use their educational process in order to preserve their collective identity and instill national pride in their youth, the Israeli authorities retain antithetical goals. Neither Israel nor the Palestinians in her midst, adhere to full integration of the Palestinian community into the state's national goals. Israel, as a "Jewish state" cannot offer its Palestinian citizens a full and genuine partnership (Rouhana, 1989). Heterogeneous societies rely intensely on their educational systems in order to bridge the ethnic differences and integrate the various groups into one "nation". This might be the case when both the majority and minority groups can identify with the national and ideological goals of the state (e.g. Middle-Eastern and European Jewish communities in Israel). In the case of discrepancy between the national goals of the minority and majority groups such as that of the Palestinians in Israel, education becomes a source of conflict rather than a nation-building institution.

In an attempt to understand the conflict over the Palestinian education in Israel, it has been argued that "... like any other system of values, the educational system is a highly manipulatable tool which can be used by those in control to instill the desirable goals" (Nakhleh, 1979 p. 10). This situation is potentially conflictive. As Nakhleh further maintains, the "... dominated minorities also tend to manipulate the educational system for their own goals. But to have control over it, that is to have it guided by the consciousness of the dominated minority, demands revolutionary action" (1979 p. 11). Under these circumstances of asymmetrical power relations between the majority and the minority groups it became clear that the priorities of the state of Israel, inspired by Zionist ideology would determine how Palestinians should be educated (Graham-Brown, 1984). This asymmetry is manifested in the fact that all educational institutions in Israel, from pre-school to university, are run by the government. Therefore, the state maintains

extensive control over the entire process of Palestinian education which facilitates its aim of manipulating their collective identity.

Because of the conflictive nature of Palestinian education in Israel and the difficulty to define educational goals that will satisfy both the Palestinian community and the state, official policy in this regard seems to have been to suspend making decisions (Landau, 1993). Failing to declare formal goals for Palestinian education did not prevent the Israeli system from striving to empty it from its cultural and nationalistic content. A comparative study examining the goals of the Palestinian and Jewish educational curricula in Israel was conducted by a group of Israeli researchers (Peres, Ehrlich & Yuval Davis, 1970). They compared the stated educational goals for both groups in four different subject matters: history, literature and language, religious studies, and civic studies. These subjects were selected because they related to the field of instilling values and cultural identity. Also, the researchers justified their selection of secondary school for a comparative study because it is in this level that " ... education makes it possible to deal with social, historical, and political problems in a mature and complete way" (p. 149). The results lend strong support to the repeated argument that the Israeli educational policy for the Palestinians aims at nothing less than their de-Palestinization and de-nationalization. Overall, they found that Palestinian education was involved in transmitting Zionist propaganda to Palestinian youth rather than teaching them their own cultural heritage and history.

Mari, identifies a "... deep conflict of interests between the state educational system and the cultural, economic, and national needs of the Arab minority as these needs are met by education" (1987 p. 25). The interests of the two groups in the field of education negate each other. According to Mari, the de facto goals of Palestinian education in Israel set by the government are threefold: "To instill feelings of self-disparagement and inferiority in Arab youth; to de-nationalize them, and particularly to de-Palestinize them, and to teach them to glorify the history, culture, and achievements of the Jewish

majority" (1987 p. 37). What such a curriculum does to the Palestinian teacher who is employed by the Israeli government and teaching Palestinian children, is not less than frustration and bitterness. The role of the Palestinian teachers in Israel embodies many conflicting expectations and the major role-conflict for them is political in nature. They constantly struggle with conflicting expectations of their community on one hand, and their employer, the government on the other (Mari, 1978).

The Israeli formal educational system for the Palestinians not only neglects their national identity and its development, but actively seeks their cultural invalidation and national humiliation. The denial of Palestinian nationalist content by the formal educational system does not, of course, eliminate it from the student aspirations. Since the government has the upper hand regarding the definition of the formal educational goals, the Palestinians have turned to an informal educational setting for that matter. As outlined by Mari (1987), "In community and cultural centers, clubs, and other ad hoc activities ... the relevant content of identity, nationality and culture have been transmitted to a younger generation hungry for such knowledge (p. 38).

Palestinian indigenous organizations involved in informal education are neither established by the Israeli government nor acquire its blessing and recognition. According to Nakhleh, "... these organizations emerged in order to fill the huge gap in the services offered in the social, educational, health and economic spheres, thus becoming a means of liberation and struggle against a strategy of deprivation and oppression" (1991, p. 4). Two contradicting educational processes are in competition over the Palestinian student's national identity: identity-blurring through formal education, and identity-emphasizing through nonformal education. In this conflict, it seems that the latter has gotten the upper hand, which in effect has sharpened the discrepancy between the school and the community.

Despite all this, the government still applies a "computer model" to the Palestinian educational process. By controlling the input of the formal education, it is believed, the

output is guaranteed: a quiescent and nationally impotent Palestinian minority. The curricula used in the Palestinian schools are still empty of any emphasis on Palestinian national identity. The pool of high school graduates from which Palestinian university students are selected "... is molded to a large degree by this [educational] system" (Nakhleh, 1977 p. 35).

Higher Education:

Higher education has two major domains of values: socio-economic and socio-political (Mari, 1979). The economic value prevails when higher education provides the individual with potential chances for upward socio-economic mobility. Politically, however, higher education is valued when it is relevant to the socio-political needs of the individual and society. According to Mari, "non-economic values of higher education seem to have special significance to developing societies as they try to develop national and political identification with their respective nation state" (1979 p. 435). The economic reward of higher education among the Palestinians in Israel contrasts most markedly with their counterparts on the West Bank. Mari (1979), found that the average income of the university graduate on the West Bank was 285% of that of a peer who did not attend university, while in Israel a Palestinian university graduate earned only 109% of his or her non graduate peer. Lack of economic reward is not the only reason behind the low ratio of Palestinian university students in Israel. The poor level of high school education, and the university entrance exams create an additional set of barriers. Graham-Brown, argues that the university entrance exam "... has been criticized in some quarters in the West as containing inbuilt cultural assumptions which favor those who come from the dominant culture or social class" (1984 p. 57).

Universities are the only educational institutions in Israel where Palestinian and Jewish students are fully integrated. In fact, it is the only situation in which Palestinians and Jews, as individuals, engage in direct interaction with each other on a presumably equal bases as students. It is because of this integration that the universities find it

difficult to apply double standard in their attempt to limit Palestinian students' political activism while at the same time allowing the majority Jewish students the freedom of political organization. However, the relationship between the Palestinian students and the university authorities is conflictive and corresponds to the government's problematic policy towards the Palestinian population at large. Nakhleh (1979), maintains that Palestinian students are politically alienated due to the educational context of the universities being in contradiction with their national aspirations. He argues that the "Israeli universities are dominated by Jewish-Zionist ideology, and this ideological basis frequently gets reinforced by rituals. Such a context places heavy sanctions on an Arab nationalist expression" (Nakhleh, 1979 p. 113). For the majority of the Palestinian students in Israel's universities this educational context is suitable for their involvement in political activism which in turn illuminates their collective identity and political development.

The ratio of Palestinian students to the total student population is very low comparable to that of the Jewish students. In 1989/90 Palestinian students composed 5.4% of the general student population in Israel's universities, whereas the Palestinians composed 16% of the total Israeli population (Al-Haj, 1995 p. 193). Despite this low proportion of Palestinian students, their existence is intensely noticeable in all campuses due to their high level of social and political activism.

Student Activism:

Student political activism refers to the engagement of students in non-institutionalized political activities. It is a worldwide and age-old phenomenon, though its degrees, forms and manifestations vary from country to country and from an historical period to another. It is evident that student activism has often been a major force behind social movements and political changes in many countries. Most of the research on the subject of student activism has focused on student activists in the West and their movements during the 1960s. However, student activism did not only start then. There

are several key examples for this history. We can find that students were a major force in the revolutionary movements of 1848 in Germany, played a major role in modern Chinese nationalism in 1919, and led the most influential university reform movement in Latin America in 1918 . On the other hand, students in the West were not considered a major force in political action until the 1960s (Albach, 1989). During that decade, student political involvement in the West became evident when " ... hundreds of thousands of black and white students became involved as the direct action of the civil rights protest mushroomed" (Fendrich & Tarleau, 1973 p. 245).

Considering that most of the theories about student activism relate to students in the West, their simple application to the situation of the Palestinian students in Israel may be misleading. A brief comparison of the social movements of the American students during the 1960s and the Palestinian students in Israel reveals the risk involved in generalizing from one situation to the other. While the American students of the 1960s were significantly more active than any other student generation in the American history, we can find that the successive generations of Palestinian students have maintained their organizations and activities at the same level since their first organizational endeavor in 1958. American student activists were the children of middle class, college educated and politically liberal parents, whereas the Palestinians students' parents were members of a demoralized national minority that was cut off from the rest of its people after they were expelled in 1948. Furthermore, the American students are in a conflict with their own national system. The Palestinian students on the other hand, are fighting a system that was established in order to serve the national interests and goals of a different group - the Jewish people. They perceive themselves as outsiders to the Israeli political system which rules over their lives

Sampson (1970), rejects the conflict between generations thesis that has been advanced as one explanation for student activism and protest. He found that the parents of students activists during the 1960s were higher in income, occupation status,

education, and politically more liberal than the parents of non activist students. Sampson is discussing the experience of American student activists during the 1960s and his conclusions may shed some light on the student movements in this particular context. The experience of the Palestinian students in Israel remains an exception. Due to their unique minority status in Israel, two other specific factors may be identified for the mode of their political activism.

First, these students are considered the educated elite, all of whom were born after the establishment of Israel and have been educated in its educational system. As a group, the Palestinian students assume a leading role in representing their own society, the Palestinian minority in Israel, because they feel that the traditional socio-political leadership is supported, if not created by, the Israeli authorities. Second, the goals and structures of the Israeli universities are politically and culturally antagonistic towards them as a national minority group. This complicated socio-political context led them from the beginning of their organization in the late 1950s to " ... express themselves in organized, intense political activity. They react to anything they consider relates to the Arab population in Israel" (Landau, 1969 p. 51).

The Palestinian students maintain their right to organize themselves in independent frameworks separate from the General Student Union (GSU). In their view, the GSU is "... dominated by the majority Jewish students who do not cater to the specific needs of Arab students so that separation between Arabs and Jews is equally visible in the university" (Zureik, 1979 p. 176). Despite their legitimate argument that as a national minority, they are confronted by special problems which are not on the agenda of the GSU, the Palestinian students' organizations are still not recognized by the university authorities. This strange situatedness in semiotic space of being neither illegal nor recognized (Eco, 1976), is illustrated in the statement of Amir Machul, the head of the Palestinian students national union. In an interview, he told New Outlook that "... the national [Palestinian students'] union is not formally recognized by the university

authorities, but there is de facto recognition: They approach us when there are problems, and we approach them" (Machul, 1984 p. 61).

It was at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where the Palestinian students had organized their first Arab Student Committee (ASC) in 1958-59 school year. Similar committees have since mushroomed into the rest of the Israeli universities. Following the Hebrew University, more ASCs were established in Tel-Aviv University (1968), the University of Haifa and the Technion (Haifa Technological Institute) (1973), and Ben-Gurion and Bar-Ilan Universities (1975). The National Federation of the Arab Students (NFAS), as an umbrella organization, was established in 1974-1975 (Salim, 1983).

Student groups linked themselves with political organizations among the Palestinian community who shared their political references and ideological affiliations. There is a confining relationship between each students' group and its mother organization in the Palestinian community in Israel. In this sense, the students movement is viewed as an extension of the larger Palestinian social movement in Israel which in turn considers itself as part of the Palestinian national movement as a whole. The main concern for the student organizations as well as that for the Palestinian community in Israel has been to maintain and assert their national and cultural identity within the parameters of their social and political reality. As such the student activities in the university can be viewed as the most comprehensive national educational process Palestinian youth receive.

Similar to any form of social movement, these students are active and organized in small groups who share similar ideological perceptions and belief systems. The individual activists therefore, develop their identity and perception of themselves within the group context as group members and not in isolation as individuals. The recruitment of new group members is a very sensitive and selective process. To become a member of any of these groups, one has to go through a long and substantial political educational process and show a high level of commitment to the group and its ideological goals. At the beginning of every academic year, each group begins searching for new potential

supporters among freshmen students. Certain students are easily identified because of their political activism in the organization in their place of residence before coming to the university. Others can be identified by showing their willingness to support the group and vote for it in the elections for the ASC.

The Study:

This context specific form of student activism is multidimensional and cannot be grasped by simple application of student development theories. Furthermore, due to the lack of research dealing with similar situations, a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative research design is essential. The exploratory aspect of the study is best served through the utilization of qualitative research methods.

A pilot study using qualitative research methods was conducted during the summer of 1996 with a sample of Palestinian student activists attending Haifa, Tel-Aviv and Ben-Gurion universities in Israel. This phase of the study included a five week long participant observation, daily writing of field notes, in-depth interviews with seventeen student activists (12 males and 5 females) and a collection of over 500 documents, newspaper articles and communiqués issued by the various student groups. Student activists were interviewed concerning the nature of their initial contact with the group of which they are members, their activities, group membership, commitment, self concept and identity, and perceptions of future commitment.

The dominant activities in which the participant students were involved during this phase of the study concentrated on the Knesset elections campaign. In this campaign, they recruited support for their respective political parties running for the Knesset. Access to the site and contact with the students was possible through Palestinian community leaders and political activists working with the students known to this researcher when he had worked with them while attending Ben-Gurion University in the mid 1980s. The interviews were conducted only after a level of trust and comfort with the

researcher was reached. All interviews were conducted in Arabic and lasted at least one hour. They were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher.

From the initial analyses of the data a number of common themes and categories emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). At this point, after two sweeps of the data, these emergent themes could be modified as a result of further reading and analysis of the interviews. The final group of themes emerging from this pilot study will serve as a point of departure to the next phase of the study scheduled to take place during the summer and fall of 1997. The study will be triangulated through member checking, participant observation, secondary interviews with family members, community members, records of meetings and events, newspaper accounts, documents, as well as Bubble Dialogue, and back translation. All interviews will be conducted in Arabic, transcribed into English and back translated into Arabic (Patton, 1990). The study will also utilize the Semantic Differential as developed by Osgood, Succi, and Tannenbaum (1957).

Initial Themes and Categories:

1. Pioneers:

Following the collapse of the USSR and the Gulf War there has been a sense of set back in the Palestinian national movement as a whole including the Palestinians in Israel and the student movement in the universities as well. This cohort of student activists see themselves as pioneers and responsible for reviving the Palestinian student movement in the Israeli universities. When they came to college in the early 1990s, Palestinian student political activism, which has always been evident throughout the Israeli campuses, was almost "non existence" for several years. This feeling of "we had to start at point zero" was evident in all the interviews.

In the words of Jamil, a law student in Tel-Aviv University and the president of the Arab Student Committee (ASC) there:

> The student movement, especially in Tel-Aviv University was non existence. There was no student activism of any kind and no elected ASC. We realized that we had to make a step forward, and together with other students revive and activate the student movement in Tel-Aviv University

> ... our goal was to activate the student movement based on the real principles on which it was based for so many years.

The groups of student activists devote special attention to socializing new group members and preparing them to maintain the group when older activist graduate. In this manner, Palestinian student organizations maintained themselves for almost three decades with graduating activists passing on leadership roles and political responsibility to the younger cadre. When this political socialization process was interrupted in the early 1990s, our participants realized that they had to take initiative and rely on themselves. Shadi, the president of the ASC at the University of Haifa and forth year law student elaborates:

> I am trying to recall if there was any type of preparation for us by the graduating activists. I can confidently say that we had no preparation whatsoever because for three years we did not have elections for the ASC. The political situation was so depressing towards the end of the Intifada and the Gulf War. There was so much depression. The older activists graduated and we remained the younger ones who used to distribute communiqués. It was natural that few of us who were motivated and welling to sacrifice will emerge and lead.

2. <u>Collective Identity and Political Awareness:</u>

Collective identity as Palestinians was strongly expressed as more important than personal identities as individuals. Collective identity was perceived as both the cause of the students' activism and as constructed by the experience of activism itself. There was a strong sense of political awareness and ideological commitment to the Palestinian question at large and to the specific situation of the Palestinian national minority in Israel. Participants attributed their personal mobilization and activism to their ideological and political commitment to the Palestinian dilemma and to their sense of obligation to serve their community.

Ashraf, an education student and active member of the ASC at the University of Haifa explains how he became politically involved:

> A person who wants to be involved in politics must have no materialistic incentives or expectations from that. One should know that one must give material... I was feeling that I was a

nationalist person and I wanted something to protect and maintain my Arab identity. These are the only two points.

In his political analysis of the situation of the Palestinian students in the Israeli universities, Jamil draws a picture parallel to the political status of the Palestinians in Israel as a whole:

> I see two levels, we have the micro and macro. What we are doing is we are dealing with the micro level. We have a small model that represents the situation of the Arab national minority in Israel. This is how I view the system-the university as a system. We are a national minority in the university which is a Jewish system with its Jewish interests, goals and slogans. The way we are treated by the university is based on our minority status. The concept "minority students" with a sectarian negative connotation, is identical to the way the system treats the Arab masses. Therefore, we need to get organized. We have to be united as a minority group, which can be done through the ASC.

The main reason Palestinian student activists organize themselves in different groups is the political diversity among them. While all groups share similar views regarding the day-to-day student activities, they each represents a clear and distinct political agenda regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict at large. During the elections to the ASC the main debate focuses on their respective political programs. To illustrate this point, it is sufficient to cite the subtitles of the program distributed by the "Front for Nationalistic Student Action" at the University of Haifa during the Palestinian student elections in 1989/90:

> The international arena following the berustrika ... the Palestinian dilemma--historical background ... the Intifada and political solutions ... Palestinian independence ... the political solution ... our political stands ... the Zionist movement ... the Arab-Zionist conflict ... the present era ... balance of powers ... the world political order ... our struggle among the masses ... our struggle among the students ... students issues.

3. <u>Perception of the Formal Educational System:</u>

Participants who graduated from public high school (the majority) blamed their formal educational system for alienating them from their national and cultural identity. Being controlled by the Israeli government, the Palestinian formal educational system was perceived as an instrument of domination and control. Private schools being the

exception rather than the rule, provided more nationalistic education for their students. Nonformal education throughout community organizations and the family (for some) were perceived as the main agents of political education before coming to college.

Palestinian teachers in the public school system constantly struggle with conflicting expectations of their community on one hand, and their employer, the government on the other. The ambiguity and stress of such a role is strongly illustrated by a Palestinian teacher in the following statement:

> I belong to the state of Israel only in the geographical sense. According to an agreement they imposed on me. I am an employee of the Ministry of Education. Receive a salary. Live here. But in the spirit, in the soul, I belong to the Palestinian people. So you tell me how I can educate children in these circumstances. A simple example - I've run into a lot of pupils here who draw, let's say, a Palestinian flag. Now I've got to tell the pupil that this is forbidden. But the pupil will consider me a traitor. And maybe I'll also feel that I'm a traitor. But if I show any approval of his picture maybe they'll fire me, or summon me for an investigation. So what do I do? I don't tell him anything. I pretend that I don't notice (Grossman, 1992 p. 50).

To pretend that they did not notice their students' work does not release the Palestinian teachers from their role conflict. Their frustration continues to determine the ambiguous messages they convey to their students. Consequently, the students lose trust in their teachers as social models with whom they can identify.

Amal, a third year student of social work in Ben-Gurion University and active in several community and women organizations in addition to her student involvement, has this to say about her testing the political limitations of her public high school English teacher:

> I realized that our teachers were politically limited but was not welling to accept that. I used to challenge them and point out their fears about their job. In tenth grade we had a new English teacher. I wanted to test his limitations so I asked him what the acronym PLO means. He told me to leave the class. I told him "if you don't know what it means I will write it on the board." He forced me out of the class... I went back and told my classmates "why are you still setting in his class if he does not know what PLO means?" They all came out with me. Then I was dismissed from school for that.

Jamil's high school education was different from that of Amal. He graduated from the Orthodox College in Haifa, a private high school and very well known for its liberal education. He recalls his experience:

> What usually prevailed in school was that we were allowed to think and debate issues. As part of the discussions we were exposed to more information that was not part of the formal curriculum. We used to receive this information as a part of the social awareness classes. For example, there was an activity in which we had to read about the history of Palestine which was not in the history books. Our school believed in this role in order to bridge the gap that existed in the formal curriculum from which we suffered and still suffering.

Political awareness and national consciousness for Amal, as a public high school graduate, was systematically de-emphasized throughout her formal education. The failure of such an "educational process" was evident in Amal's awareness of the positive experience of political socialization she received in a local club in her community.

> I used to spend most of my time in the club. Let me use the word "used"-- they "used" us to work for the club. We were a group 12 young girls who were selling T-shirt and raise funds for the club. We spent a lot of time around the people in the club and used to hear how they run meetings. I was looking foreword to when I get older to be able to set with them in these meetings. After they leave the meeting, me and my friends used to set on the same chairs and imitate the meeting and talk like them. They were for me, especially Abu Jubran, he was my spiritual father ...I got most of my ideology from him. Until today, I can argue and challenge anybody but him.

4. <u>Group Identity and Group Interaction:</u>

The small face-to-face groups of student activists are part of larger community based political organizations. Political commitment and group identification was evident in most of the participants' reactions. Interpersonal interactions in the small groups were influenced by the general political framework of the group. Interpersonal conflicts, while perceived as legitimate component of group interaction were suppressed or ignored in order to maintain group unity. They viewed interpersonal conflicts as destructive and threatening the group cohesion and cooperation.

Eris came from a Jewish background, renounced Zionism and refused to serve in the Israeli Army. After several years of involvement in anti-Zionist Jewish organizations,

she and her husband decided to join the Palestinian national movement. Because the main problem involves Palestinian oppression "you can't be anti-Zionist and limit your work to all Jewish organizations." A long time political activists, Eris was dismisses from school several times because of her political involvement. At age 34 she returned to the University of Haifa to complete her Bachelor degree. Here is how she views activists' ideological commitment in her political group:

> I can't see anybody who joined Abna al-Balad for personal gains. Even if we talk about changes within 50-60 years that may benefit the masses. No one was that naive to think that the situation will change in 5-6 years so they themselves can benefit from that... People who join Abna al-Balad know that they will never get jobs. You go to the university just to get a degree to hang it on your wall. If you are Abna Balad you go through so many police interrogations, lots of troubles, they dismiss you from the university, lots of sacrifice. I worked with lots people who went to jail and got beaten by the police. Every single person in Abna al-Balad joined based on principles and convection. I am positive about that because this involves lots of sacrifice.

Shadi grew up identifying himself with the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, an umbrella organization dominated by the Israeli Communist Party (ICP). Since he came to the university his political affiliation has become stronger.

> I became involved in political work since I was in high school. The Intifada was getting a strong momentum during these years. I wanted to know more so I began reading and asking lots of questions to older people around me. I was young and so eager to know what was happening. From reading and talking to people I found that no single political organization was active among the Arab masses and committed to our issues and national goals as much as the ICP. This is well known fact. Some people attack us and say "what, do you think you are the only group who was active?" Yes there was only the ICP. This is a historical fact. They were the only ones who were active. And also the Democratic Front was the only organization in my town so I joined the ranks of the Front.

When interpersonal conflicts took place in Shadi's group in the university, as a leader his first concern was with the group and its goals.

> When we encounter interpersonal conflicts we deal with them through utilizing the group relations. You feel responsible toward the group and your behavior will affect the group as a whole. When we put the group interest before our individual interest things get resolves easily ... Once we had two members who were not talking to each other. We did not even talk about the

problem they had. We simply paired them together to work on something for the group. They were forced to talk to one another and eventually the conflict was resolved.

5. Gender Issues:

Women student activists expressed awareness and need to address women's issues as part of the political-social agenda of their student organizations, more so than their male comrades. Mobilizing Palestinian women for the national struggle, and meanwhile ignoring the socio-cultural constrains that bind them to limited kinds of actions and roles was perceived as a political hypocrisy. Being women in a patriarchal society which is also suffering from national oppression as a whole, Palestinian women activists find themselves advocating both nationalist and feminist agendas at the same time.

The complexity of the oppression in the case of Palestinian women is best illustrated in the program of Al-Fanar; The Palestinian Feminist Organization.

> ... As Palestinians they suffer from oppression and discrimination based on nationality, as women they are dominated by the patriarchal system throughout their lives, and as female workers they are the most deprived sector of the workforse. These forms of oppression do not operate separately, but are intertwined, and clearly influence one another. The liberation of women - as persons with a social, personal, gender, and national identity - requires a simultaneous struggle on many fronts, which cannot be fragmented or conducted in separate stages (1991, p. 1).

By stressing all aspects of oppression as they are manifested in one group's life conditions, it is clear that Palestinian women are calling for the most radical political and social agenda. The contradiction between revolutionary political consciousness and reactionary social-gender consciousness demonstrated by many Palestinian male activists is still the major dilemma facing Palestinian women activists (Abdo, 1991). Eris, was very articulate in describing the situation of the women activists in her organization:

> I will show you something that I wrote about the situation of the women in the movement. At the University of Haifa almost half of the activists are women. Outside the university the portion of women activists drops to 1/10. In a large demonstration, half the participants are women. In a summer camp half the participants are women. They spend a whole week on the beach and there is no problem with that... In a party half the audience are women. In the secretariat of the movement there are no women at all. There is only one. Women don't get to be in the leadership of the movement... When I ask these women why don't they come to the meeting, they say "we are not

allowed to stay out late." Now, they allow them to go to all the social functions but when it comes to political meeting where they might be involved in leadership activities they stay at home.

Samira, has just graduated with a law degree from the University of Haifa and began working on her Masters degree in sociology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She was in Haifa, her hometown, during the summer to work for her party's campaign in the Knesset elections. She illustrates her frustration about being used as a token for women representation and the party's secretariat.

> I never had felt inferiority among other student activists... I began feeling strange when we started to establish al-Tajamu in the community two years ago and I was included as a woman ... I started going to the meetings. Then I started to feeling strange for two reasons. First, because they were all older people and second, I was there as a woman not because I was qualified to be there. It is kind of a ugly feeling to feel that you are there not for what you are and what you know...At some point another woman joined the secretariat and we became two women... I had the feeling that I had to work harder to prove myself.

6. Political Socialization and Future Commitment:

When asked about what might explain their long term commitment after graduation, the participants attributed the tendency to persist as activists to internal factors such as the level of ones ideological consciousness and belief system, and attributed possible tendencies for disengagement to external factors such as economical and political pressure. College experience in general and student activism in particular were perceived as the most extensive experience of political education for Palestinian youth in Israel.

Khalid, a forth year law student in the University of Haifa delineates the impact of students activism on ideological development:

> In terms of age, it is during the university when we start to establish our political ideas. When you start to build something new you feel that you have reached the stars. You feel that you have accomplished a lot. You still in your peak. When you feel that you have done something important you feel full and complete.

While this may shed some light on the stage through which political development takes place, still according to Khalid, knowing the difference between the students

political activism and the street's politics after one graduates is fundamental for long term commitment.

> We talked about the ideological aspect and how it develops...Let's not forget that in the university you deal with 2000 students all together. You feel that you can have an impact. Outside I don't know how much an impact you can have...Those individuals who developed all of their political knowledge at the university and did not experience the street's politics will be surprised when they graduate. Individuals who come to the university with some political knowledge and experience and view the university as just another stage that they go through will be more committed in the future.

In order to persist, for Ashraf political awareness in itself is not enough. One needs to belong to an organization and also receive some protection and support from the larger national movement. He explain:

> In my opinion it is a proven fact that in order to remain active you have to be organized. I want an Arab Palestinian individual who can think for [her] himself, but you also have to find an organization that will provide you with these opportunities and recognize your input... The second thing and the most important is that when you have somebody who is nationalist and does not have a state to protect him [her], you must protect this person. What I mean by protecting him [her] is not only within his [her] own organization but also in terms of employment. You have to take care of these people who struggle to maintain their Arab identity.

The Proposed Formal Study:

The formal study is scheduled to be conducted during summer and fall of 1997. By that time the final points of the design will be completed. However at this point, and based on the initial findings from the pilot study, the mixed method of qualitative and quantitative techniques is under the process of preparation and will include three complementary modes of data collection. Following is a brief description of each of these components of the study.

1. **In-depth Interviews:**

A follow up set of structured in-depth interviews will be conducted with the same group of seventeen student participants. Questions will probe deeper into the themes that emerged from the first round of interviews. In addition a purposely selected sample of participants equally divided between male and female activists will be interviewed. The

interviews will be used as a primary technique to provide the participants with the opportunity to construct their own meaning and understanding of their experience.

2. **Bubble Dialogue:**

This computer operated program was developed by the Language Development and Hyper Media Research Group in Ulster University in Northern Ireland (O'Neill & McMahon, 1991). The basic principle of this program is that a pair of student participants will be exposed to a theme depicted in a cartoon. The participants will role play the characters in the cartoon through taking turns in typing their responses. Each response will be on two level, one is private and the other is public. On the private level, the student will type his or her thoughts and feelings knowing that they will not be exposed to the other partner. On the public level the student will type his or her talk which will be seen by the other partner and to which the other partner is expected to respond. The program lends itself to the researcher's imagination to create whatever conflict situations he or she wants to examine. Analysis of the created dialogue will provide a deeper insight into the students private thoughts about interpersonal conflicts and the ways in which conflict resolution influence their commitment and development. This is a powerful tool that will help understand the personal perception of interpersonal conflicts especially because of the prevailing tendency to avoid such conflicts on the public domain.

Conflictive scenarios will be developed based on the initial themes emerging from the pilot study and will be relevant to the experience of the Palestinian student activists. Examples of conflict situations may include the following: a) Interpersonal conflict between two group members arises from the fact that one of them needs time to study and cannot devote enough time to the group's activities. b) A debate between a female and a male student over addressing women's issues in the group's agenda. c) An argument between two students from two different political groups over the political program of their groups. d) A male student arguing with his parents who think that his political activism is jeopardizing his school and future career. e) A female student arguing with

her parents who think that her political activism is jeopardizing her school and future career.

3. Semantic Differential:

This part of the study will assess the Palestinian student activists' attitudes towards self concept and personality development and also measure the same-concepts in non-activist Palestinian students. It is the contention of this researcher that the student activist will have a stronger sense of self -concept, be more connected to his/her community, have a clearer and more hopeful sense of the future, and be more positive in his/her outlook on life. The combined measures of the qualitative and quantitative strategies will give an accurate perspective on how the phenomena of activism operates to help the student form a social political identity, sense of responsibility, and awakens the awareness of political responsibility and reciprocity.

The Semantic Differential as used by Lower (1967) related to students' self-concept and personality development as they perceived it being influenced by influential others. In his study with college students at Northern Illinois University, Lower (1967) developed a Semantic Differential scale made of 30 personality traits and tested it for reliability and validity. Lower's assessment of the "...self-concept as being developed in a social context" (1967, p. 121), is of great importance to the understanding of the Palestinian students' perceptions of their self-concept within the context of their social and political background. This part of the study will involve three steps. First, students will be asked to identify three influential individuals or groups that had an impact on their lives and rank order them. Second, they will respond to the Semantic Differential Scale assessing their perceptions of each of these individuals or groups. Third, they will respond to the Semantic Differential Scale describing their own personality traits and self- concept. Correlational statistical methods will be utilized to assess the relationship between the students' perceptions of influential others and their self concept. The instrument will be administered to representative samples of both student activists and

non-activist students. The purpose of this comparison is to investigate if the self-concept of the student activists is perceived to have been influenced differently by their political groups than their family in comparison to non-activist students who are not associated with similar political groups.

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